

## Take to the trails

**MBCB to hold second annual Overnight Trail Ride April 26-27**

**By Tony Martin  
Associate Editor**

Participants in the second annual Overnight Trail Ride on April 26-27 at Central Hills Retreat near West will be able to relax in new quarters — the four-legged participants, that is.

"Several volunteers from North Delta Association came down to build the new stables," said Aaron Gantt, maintenance supervisor at Central Hills Retreat. "They worked here the latter

see TRAIL on p. 9



**HOME FOR HORSES** — Aaron Gantt (left), maintenance supervisor at Central Hills Retreat, and retreat staffer Clay Hathcock inspect the stables recently completed at the camp facility near West that will allow for expansion of the only equine program at a Mississippi Baptist encampment. The stables, built by volunteers from North Delta Association, will be put to use for the first time during the Overnight Trail Ride on April 26-27. (Photo by Tony Martin)

## Baptist former governor reverses his position on same sex marriage

**By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor**

Former Governor Ronnie Musgrove, the last Mississippi Baptist to serve in the state's top office, reversed his long-held position against same sex marriage in a March 20 blog on the Huffington Post and now says he regrets being on the wrong side of the issue when he was a public official.

"What is sad to me is that my understanding of this issue did not come until after I had left office and no longer had the

power to right this wrong. This reality weighs heavily on me to this day," wrote Musgrove, a Democrat who served as governor from 2000-04.

He reflected on his early family history, when his father died and his mother became involved in an abusive relationship that essentially left him parentless and cast him from his home.

"As I thought about this issue, I came to understand that in order to do everything possible to

keep another child from growing up like I did, we cannot continue to blindly disqualify people from becoming parents — just as we should not deny an entire group of people the basic civil right of marriage — simply because many of us fear what we do not understand.

"Like a majority of Americans in recent years, I came to understand that fear of homosexuality was leading our governments —



**MUSGROVE**

see MUSGROVE on p. 9

## Miss. Legislature offers support for imprisoned pastor

**WASHINGTON (BP and local reports)** — Christian pastor Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen of Iranian descent imprisoned in Tehran, tells of the torture he has endured for his faith as well as the joy that comes with forgiving his perpetrators in a letter to his family released March 22

by the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which is representing him. In the meantime, the Mississippi Legislature passed a concurrent resolution condemning Abedini's imprisonment and supporting efforts to secure his release.

In his letter written on scraps of newsprint, a badly beaten Abedini said he is able to endure because the joy of the Lord is his strength and he has learned to forgive those who persecute him.

"I forgave the prison doctor who did not listen to me and did not give me the medication that I needed. I forgave the interrogator who beat me," Abedini wrote. "...The minute I forgave them and loved them, that second I was filled with unspeakable joy. ...Love is as strong as death."

He described an incident when a prison guard learned he was a Christian pastor and replied, "You are unclean!"

"It really broke my heart," the pastor wrote perhaps weeks ago. "The nurse also would come to take care of us and provide us with treatment, but she said in front of others 'in our religion we are not supposed to touch you, you are unclean.'"

The doctor, Abedini said, had instructed that he not receive the pain medication that other prisoners received because he was considered unclean.

When Abedini, who frequently is blindfolded, caught a glimpse of himself in the mirror of an elevator, he said did not recognize himself. "My hair was shaven, under my eyes were swollen three times what they

should have been, my face was swollen, and my beard had grown."

Representative Chris Brown of Aberdeen introduced the Abedini resolution in the Mississippi House of Representatives where it passed unanimously and was sent to the state Senate, which concurred unanimously with the resolution.

"Whereas, it is the policy of this legislature to express support for such a noble cause as the release of a minister of the gospel facing an unjust imprisonment for offering people hope in a troubled world... we do hereby commend the dedication of Pastor Saeed Abedini in the face of such an unjust imprisonment and express support for all efforts to obtain his release."

Signing the resolution were House Speaker Philip Gunn of Clinton, Lt. Governor Tate Reeves for the Senate, and Brown as the original sponsor. The resolution can be viewed in

### On the Inside

For complete text of Abedini's letter from prison, please turn to page four.



**ABEDINI**

see SUPPORT on p. 8

### Inside

Direction

Sunday

Lessons

Editorial

Biblioclip

How to Be

a Christian

The Baptist

Children's

Just for the Record

Classifieds

APR 04 2013  
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Just for the Record ..... 6, 12

Classifieds ..... 5





## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### What it took to get us here

*He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.*

*Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

*He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.*

*By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth. — Isaiah 53:2-9 (NIV)*

**A**s we rightly prepare to observe Easter 2013 with the joy and appreciation of the saved, we know that our Savior lives and is one day coming for us, His beloved. There's no doubt about that.

Christians celebrate our risen Savior with images of the empty tomb with death clothes neatly folded on the slab of rock where Jesus was laid. Our crosses memorialize the sacrifice He made for us, and emphasize the significance of His resurrection. To those religious symbols we have added eggs, bunny rabbits, and baskets of colorful candy.

Sometimes it seems too neat and clean — almost sterile. It's an easy thing to read a few chapters of the Bible once a year or so

about the mistreatment of Jesus and then go about our daily business. Perhaps we should pause during this season of victory, and contemplate exactly what it was Jesus went through to save us. It wasn't nearly as pretty as our modern images depict.

The beating that Jesus endured can hardly be imagined today, in our gentle society. All the flesh was literally torn from his back, exposing raw nerve endings and ragged muscle. On that mangled and bleeding back was placed a wooden cross, large and heavy and rough so that the pain in His still-fresh wounds would be maximized. He was beaten again as he carried his own instrument of death to the place of the skull.

There, he was stripped naked and fastened to the cross he had carried with the large-diameter, blunt-end nails of the day that severed nerves and blood vessels with great agony. His feet were affixed in a similar manner, configured so as to make it impossible to breathe once the cross was upright.

His cross dropped with a thud into the hole where it would stand, no doubt tearing the flesh around the nails and further opening the wounds. After a short while, insects attracted from great distances by the scent of His blood settled into the open wounds.

He hung there, gasping for breath and pleading for water as those around the cross ridiculed him. The pain rose, the insects increased, the mockery rang in his ears, and yet His only plea was for His Father to forgive us.

After a prolonged period of agony, it was finished and the happy part began. The tomb was soon empty, our Savior had risen, and the world would never be the same.

We Christians have every right to celebrate the greatest event in history, the completed plan of eternal salvation for all mankind. However, let us never overlook what it took to get us to that point. It wasn't pretty, and it didn't come without unimaginable suffering, but it had to be done. The prophet Isaiah understood those facts 700 years before Christ was born. On this and every joyous Easter, we should too.

## Should we roll with the times?

**T**he election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio as pontiff sparked an interesting response from much of the mainstream news media in the United States.

There was a great deal of angst, and even shock, that the Catholic Church chose a leader who holds to traditional Catholic beliefs. It appeared many were hoping the church would suddenly choose someone who would move away from all the conservative moral standards Catholics find rooted in their sacred texts, but which seem outlandish to those who have moved on to more progressive thinking.

The yearning of the media during the days leading up to the papal conclave may not have come to fruition, but it helps us consider this moment. You can see the reaction across the channels, but one example may help. Erin Burnett's comments on CNN included this bold statement: "The Church helps the poor and the lonely, and I bet there are a lot of people who might return to the Church if it changed."

Erin is blunt enough to say what many have thought — that if churches would just get with the times, people would return. Is there any evidence to show this to be the case? In short, no.

This desired capitulation to culture is a familiar refrain. As a matter of fact, this is the story of much of mainline Protestantism in the United States. In the desire to engage culture, several mainline Protestant denominations aligned with culture's values and in a great historic twist of irony, their churches didn't stop shrinking. They shrunk faster.

Regardless of whether or not you believe you are right, as I assume Erin does, the claim that capitulating to the whims of culture will lead to a renaissance in religion has no statistical basis whatsoever. It seems many in the media were hoping for a liberal mainline Protestant as pope, and shockingly, a Catholic showed up.

Those espousing conservative beliefs considered antiquated by mainstream culture are often the ones experiencing growth. The Great Awakenings even provide historical precedence for this. In previous religious renaissances, it was Baptists and Methodists who saw the explosive growth. Today it is the Pentecostals.

The Pentecostals, according to the



**Guest opinion**  
with Ed Stetzer

National Council of Churches, are one of the few denominations actually growing in the United States. The Assemblies of God grew by 3.99% from 2011-12, and the Pentecostal Assemblies of the World were up 20% from 2011-12.

Meanwhile, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), a progressive mainline denomination and the 10th largest in the nation, saw a drop of 3.42%, and the United Church of Christ, a small denomination only getting smaller, decreased in membership by 2.02% — and this is in one year, not a decade. The math does not look good.

My friends leading several of these growing Pentecostal denominations will assure you they have not changed their beliefs about controversial issues nor have they sought to downplay their practices, which many find odd and outdated at best. Yet, their churches are growing.

Regarding the Catholic Church, although many former Catholics from the northeastern elite have walked away from their faith, many devout Catholics consider these beliefs not something to easily discard in the name of cultural expediency.

Now, obviously, I am not a Catholic. I am not only a Protestant, but a conservative evangelical one at that. However, I do think the breathless reporting of the mainstream news media, surprised that Catholics would choose someone with actual Catholic beliefs, actually shows something more about the media: their desire for religion to evolve, and, at the end of the day, a misguided impression that cultural capitulation will lead to more religious believers.

Moving away from your beliefs neither creates converts nor reverts (those who might return, like an Erin Burnett). It simply downplays what you believe and

see STETZER on p. 9

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**Postmaster:**  
Send changes of address to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

**Send news, communication, and address changes to:** The Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

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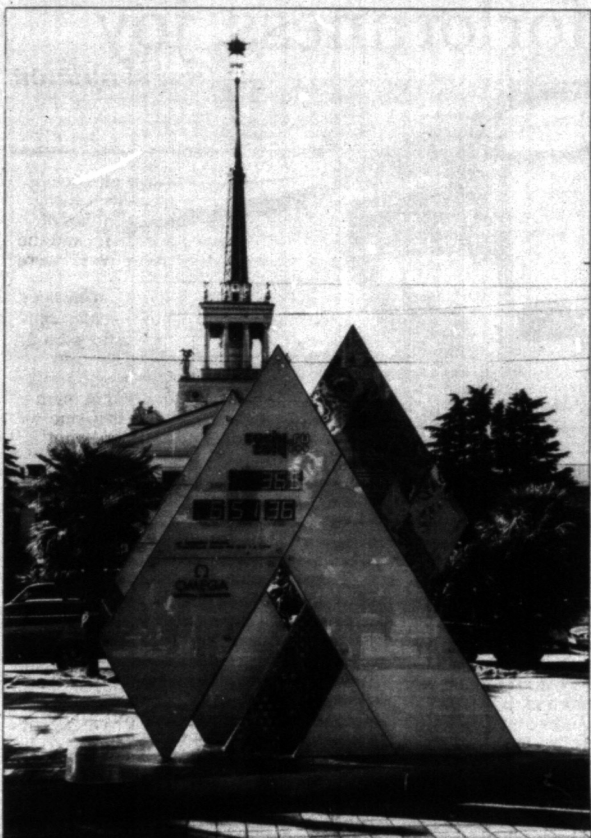


VOLUME 137 • NUMBER 13 • ISSN-0005-5778

Published weekly except weeks of July 4 and Christmas by the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, 515 Mississippi Street, Jackson, MS 39201. Subscription \$10.35 per year payable in advance. Economy plans available for cooperating Mississippi churches. Periodicals postage paid at Jackson, MS. Member, Association of State Baptist P.ers. Deadlines: News items — one calendar week prior to requested publication date. Advertising — two calendar weeks prior to requested publication date. All submissions are subject to editing.



# Baptists making plans for 2014 Winter Olympics



**GETTING READY** — Located in front of Sochi's most recognizable landmark, the Maritime Terminal, the Olympic countdown clock ticks toward the start of the 2014 Winter Olympics in the Russian city located on the Black Sea. BP photo)

**SOCHI, Russia (BP)** — Excitement is mounting in the Olympic host city of Sochi, Russia, where the countdown clock in the central square displays fewer than 365 days until the Opening Ceremonies of the 22nd Winter Olympic Games.

In February, Russian dignitaries and Olympic officials celebrated the one-year mark in the recently completed Bolshoy Ice Dome in nearby Adler. Several thousand Sochi residents gathered to watch the countdown at one of the live Olympic viewing sites in their city's downtown area along the coast of the Black Sea.

Olympic officials and Sochi residents were not the only ones in the area watching as the clock clicked down to the one-year mark. Southern Baptists from Oklahoma and Georgia joined International Mission Board (IMB) missionaries in the city as preparations for Olympic ministry continue.

The Engage Sochi project is an IMB initiative that mobilizes Southern Baptists to reach the people of Sochi through broad sharing of the Gospel and planting of churches before, during and after the Games. Staff members and volunteers from two state Baptist conventions joined Engage Sochi project leaders to plan for more than 400 people to share the Gospel in Sochi during the Olympics in February and the Paralympics in March 2014.

"I think it is important for conventions to be leading out in Olympic ministry," said Georgia Baptist Convention staffer Mar-

ty Youngblood, who is a veteran of Olympic ministries. "It allows us to reach the world in a much more responsible way, as far as our resources go."

Unlike other Olympic ministry projects, Engage Sochi focuses on more than broad Gospel-sharing. At its core is a strong church planting component. While volunteers will have the opportunity to share the Gospel with people from around the world, the primary focus is to reach individuals who live and work in the Olympic city.

Youngblood said the intentional church planting at an Olympic event makes the project unique.

"We are going to be focusing on the people of Sochi," he said. "Mass evangelism is good. It's important to focus on the people from around the world but when we focus on the city and the people of Sochi, we leave more of a lasting influence than we usually would during the Olympics."

Bob Nigh, managing editor of the Oklahoma Baptist Messenger, believes the Engage Sochi philosophy is important. "We need to be able to look back on this and ask, 'What difference did all of that make?' and hopefully and prayerfully, this is going to make a huge difference in the lives of many people who live in Sochi."

Nigh joined Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma worship and music specialist Randy Lind and several members of the Singing Churchmen of Oklahoma, who will perform in Sochi during the first full week of the Games.

While the group spent the week seeking venues where they can perform as a hundred-person-strong men's choir, they will spend much of their time in Sochi during the Games singing in small groups throughout the area as a way to meet people and share the Gospel.

"We looked at Mexico, China, and some other places to minister in 2014," Lind said, "but when I heard that we could help local pastors and also do work in church planting, that really touched my heart. The fact that we get to do all of this during the Olympics is just icing on the cake."

With just under a year remaining before the kick-off of the Olympics in Sochi, much of the city and surrounding area is covered in a cloud of construction dust that can be seen from a nearby mountaintop.

Just as Russian officials are preparing the city of Sochi to host the Olympics, the Engage Sochi team and scores of volunteers have much to do as well.

"We are going to be praying a lot," Lind said. "We will be preparing to do things that we believe will reach out and touch people's hearts musically, but we will also be refreshing that story... about how our lives have been changed by God working in us and how Christ has made a difference in our lives."

*Editor's note: Updates and other information on Engage Sochi, including video features, can be found at [engagesochi.org](http://engagesochi.org).*

## Mississippian named vice president at SBC Exec. Committee

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — Jackson native and Mississippi College graduate Ken Weathersby will begin April 1 as vice president for convention advancement with the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee in Nashville, the first African American to hold an Executive Committee vice presidential position.

Weathersby, who most recently served as presidential ambassador for ethnic church relations with Southern Baptists' North American Mission Board in Alpharetta, Ga., has held a series of trail-blazing positions with various SBC entities over the past two decades.

Weathersby will work in his newest role to increase ethnic participation and grow relationships with demographic subsets within the SBC, such as young ministers and pastors of small churches and mega-churches. He will also oversee the Executive Committee's Global Evangelical Relations ministry.

Executive Committee President Frank Page, who is also currently serving as interim pastor of First Church, Jackson, said Weathersby will bring a wealth of expertise to the office. "Dr. Ken Weathersby brings a level of experience

that will be beneficial to the Executive Committee and to our convention.

"Ken is a friend and a man who is trusted and respected across our convention. We thank God for this new addition."

Weathersby replaces Thomas Hammond, who has resigned to accept the pastorate of First Church, Alpharetta, Ga.

Weathersby was the first person to fill the role of NAMB presidential ambassador, created in August 2011. He has held a series of leadership roles at NAMB, including associate vice president for multi-ethnic mobilization, vice president for the church planting group, senior strategist for the evangelization group, and senior director of the church planting group's equipping team.

Weathersby in 1999 was the first African American pastor to hold a full-time associate professorship at New Orleans Seminary, where he was director of the seminary's Cecil B. Day Center for Church Planting and director of the Nehemiah Project, which steered seminary graduates into church planting.

He also has served the Tennessee Baptist Convention as evangelism specialist and team leader for evangelism strategies and director of the black church extension and multi-housing office.

The Black Denominational Servants Network honored Weathersby in 2012 for his denominational service with the Kennedy Boyce Award, named for the first two African American pastors to join the SBC in 1953.

The National African American Fellowship in 2009 honored him with the Best Friend of Pastors award for his work in facilitating relationships between the SBC and black pastors.

Weathersby has planted and pastored churches in Alabama, Ohio, and Baton Rouge, where he started and led Douglas Avenue Church from 1989-93.

He holds a master of divinity degree from Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., and a B.A. from Baptist-affiliated Mississippi College in Clinton. He also holds a doctor of ministry degree from Reformed Seminary in Jackson.

He and his wife Belva Kennedy Weathersby, from Charleston, S.C., have a daughter, Kenyeta, a student at South Carolina State University in Orangeburg, S.C., and a son, Breon, a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta.



**WEATHERSBY**

"Dr. Ken Weathersby brings a level of experience that will be beneficial to the Executive Committee and to our convention. Ken is a friend and a man who is trusted and respected across our convention. We thank God for this new addition."

**Frank Page**

**Executive Committee President**



## Directions

With Jim Futral,  
executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist  
Convention Board



# The Easter Story

(Read slowly)

God.  
Creation.  
Light.  
World.  
Man.  
Woman.  
Paradise.  
Temptation.  
Sin.  
Fear.  
Loneliness.  
Pain.  
Alienation.  
Promise.  
Hope.  
Sinfulness.  
Leaders.  
Sinfulness.  
Judges.  
Sinfulness.  
Prophets.  
Sinfulness.  
Kings.  
Sinfulness.  
Despair.  
Jesus.  
Light.  
Hope.  
Promise.  
Rejection.  
Sinfulness.  
Cross.  
Death.  
Burial.  
Resurrection.  
Life.  
Hope.  
Re-creation.  
Light.  
Paradise.  
Hallelujah!

The author can be contacted  
at [directions@mcb.org](mailto:directions@mcb.org).

# American pastor imprisoned in Iran writes of beatings, forlornness, joy

Following is the text of American pastor Saeed Abedini's letter, translated into English and circulated March 22 by the American Center for Law and Justice, which is representing the imprisoned American pastor during his confinement in Evin Prison in Tehran, Iran.

Hello to my dear love and wife,

When I saw my family for the first time behind the glass walls, I could see my mom four meters away. As she approached me and saw my face, she broke down and could not get closer. She was crying. I understood what she felt because after weeks of being in solitary confinement in Evin Prison, I also got to see my face in the mirror of an elevator that was taking me to the prison hospital. I said hi to the person staring back at me because I did not recognize myself. My hair was shaven, under my eyes were swollen three times what they should have been, my face was swollen, and my beard had grown.

It was a few days ago when one of my family members, with weary eyes and after running around for 15 weeks in trying to get me out of prison, said that my dad says every single day that "this week I will get my son out of prison." But this does not happen and he is not able to get me out of prison. In that instant I looked into the wrinkled and tired eyes of my dad. I could clearly see that he had ran around for months and he had no more strength left in him. It was very hard seeing my family in such a situation.

You, my wife, on the other side of the world, alone with the kids. Alone and worried. My family here in Iran, being interrogated, tired and under so much pressure.

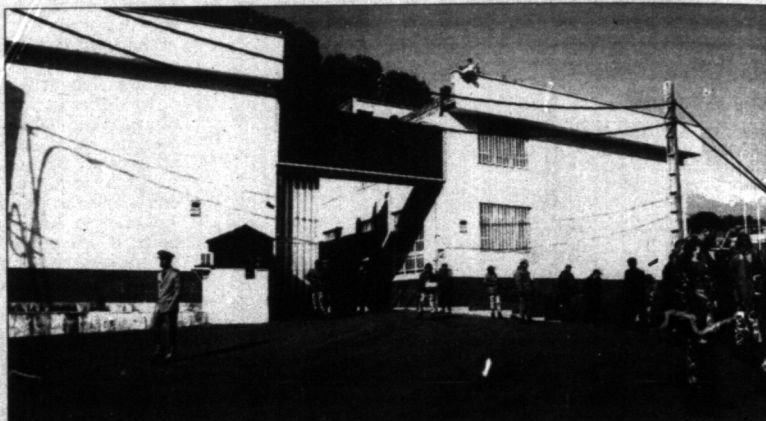
With the loud voice of the prison guard, our visitation had ended and they put covers over our eyes and we returned to the dark room void of any natural sunlight.

I started praying for my family. My dear Naghmeh. You are the love of my life. I am always in love with you.

Dear Naghmeh, I have been stung so many times that I have become full of poison. This is an Iranian saying. A lot of people say that they have been stung by so many people that their whole being is full of poison like a poisonous snake. It means that we have been bitten by the snakes of this world so many times that, that all of the poison has collected in us and that we are like the poisonous snake. But if we sting anyone, we will die. This Iranian saying is full of spirit of revenge and unforgiveness and every time I would hear this in Iran, I would get very sick hearing it.

A few days ago they brought a young war veteran who was disabled in 80% of his body in my cell. He had been put in solitary confinement with his horrific condition. And this had made him

very mad and he kept saying "why did they do this to me? I gave my whole life for their sake. See what they have done to me!!!"



**AMERICAN JAILED** — Evin Prison in Tehran, where American pastor Saeed Abedini is being held, is known for its widespread brutality and hatred of Christians. (BP photo)

And when he would get very mad he would say "I will take my revenge!"

I spoke to this young man until 4 in the morning. I spent time with him and spoke to him to forgive. When we don't forgive, we drink the poison ourselves and then wait for the other person to die. And we take the knife that has hurt us and we stab ourselves with it again! And this is the will of the evil one who wants to destroy us.

But when we forgive, we pour out the poison of the enemy and of the devil and we don't let the poison stay in us and we don't let the poison make us into poisonous snakes! So that we don't become like the person we despised and who persecuted and tortured us.

Maybe you ask, what is the secret of being so happy in such a hard situation?

Forgiveness and a change of attitude. When we forgive, we become free and we become messengers of peace and reconciliation and goodness. And whoever stings us, we can take into our embrace and love them. And in this dark and evil time, we can live full of love and full of peace and full of joy and shine like the stars! Glory be to His Name.

I forgave the prison doctor who did not listen to me and did not give me the medication that I needed. I forgave the interrogator who beat me. Every day when I would see the interrogator and for the last time when I saw him, I forgave him. I smiled at him and with respect shook his hand and I said my goodbye. The minute I forgave them and loved them, that second I was filled with unspeakable joy. I saw in the eyes of the interrogator that he had come to respect me and as he was leaving, he could not look behind him. Love is as strong as death.

We have to get rid of the poison in our body because if we don't, we will die. We have to get rid of both poisons; first the poison of the snake that bit us and also the poison in us that was created by that bite. We can get rid of the first poison by forgiveness and we can get rid of the second poison by humility, by dying to ourselves, and allowing the band-

aid of love and goodness to replace the empty place of the wound. So that we are not a tool of darkness and revenge, but that we can be light and love and a vessel of forgiveness and we can be transformed in the process.

Surely you have someone in your family, city, work or environment that have become like poisonous snake who have bitten you and tried to make you poisonous. So, forgive them and use the antidote of love and be Victorious!

One of the chances of forgiveness came when I was blindfolded and a guard was holding my hand guiding me. He asked "what are you here for? What is your crime?" I said "I am Christian Pastor." All of the sudden he let go of my hand and said "so you are unclear! I will tell others not to defile themselves by touching you!" He would tell others not to get close to me. It really broke my heart. The nurse would also come to take care of us and provide us with treatment, but she said in front of others "in our religion we are not supposed to touch you, you are unclear. Baha'i (religion) and Christians are unclear!" She did not treat me and that night I could not sleep from the intense pain I had. According to the doctor's instructions, they would not give me the pain medication that they would give other prisoners because I was unclear.

I could not fall sleep one night due to the pain when all of a sudden I could hear the sound of dirty sewer rats with their loud noises and screeches. It was around 4 in the morning. It sounded like laughter in a way.

Even though many would call me unclear and filthy and would not even want to pass by me and they had abandoned me and they were disgusted to touch me because they were afraid that they would also become unclear, but I knew that in the eyes of Jesus Christ, and in the eyes of my brothers and sisters, I am like the sewer rat, beautiful and lovable — not disgusting and unclear — and like the rats I can scream with joy within those prison walls and worship my Lord in joy and strength.

The Joy of the Lord is my strength. Amen.

Maybe you ask, what is the secret of being so happy in such a hard situation? Forgiveness and a change of attitude. When we forgive, we become free and we become messengers of peace and reconciliation and goodness. And whoever stings us, we can take into our embrace and love them. And in this dark and evil time, we can live full of love and full of peace and full of joy and shine like the stars!



## Easter Services

► **Calvary Church, Vicksburg:** Resurrection celebration Easter revival, Mar. 28-31; Thurs. - Sat., 6:30 p.m.; Sun., 10 a.m.

## MS POSITIONS

**NEW SIGHT BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS.** SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH MINISTER. Please send resumes to 629 Forest Trail, Brookhaven, MS. 39601, Attn: Youth Search Committee.

**NEW ZION BAPTIST CHURCH, 275 ANDREWS ROAD, BRAXTON, MS, 39044.** New Zion in Simpson County, is looking for a Music Director for worship services and to lead the Adult Choir. If interested, send request for info to the Search Committee, Mrs. Linda Stanley.

**IMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, LOCATED IN STEENS, MS.** IS TAKING APPLICATIONS FOR THE POSITION ADMINISTRATOR/HEAD OF SCHOOL. Applicants should be called to Christian education. They must hold or be able to meet qualifications for Administrators. Website: [www.immanuelchristianschool.net](http://www.immanuelchristianschool.net) Address: 6405 Military Road Steens, MS 39766 Contact: Gene Coleman Email: [genecoleman52@yahoo.com](mailto:genecoleman52@yahoo.com) <<mailto:genecoleman52@yahoo.com>>

**JOURNEY OF FAITH, BRANDON, MS IS SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL MINISTER OF MUSIC,** a team player, called to music. Send resume to Music Staff Search, Journey of Faith, 5413 Highway 18, Brandon, MS 39042.

**JOURNEY OF FAITH, BRANDON, MS IS SEEKING MUSICIANS: LEAD GUITAR, BASS GUITAR, DRUMMER.** Must be dedicated team player, ministry driven. Please send contact info to [jofchurch@att.net](mailto:jofchurch@att.net) or contact Sharon @ 601-939-5002.

**UNION HALL BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS.** IS SEEKING A PART-TIME BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR. Resumes may be mailed to the church at 1242 Nola Road N. E., Brookhaven, MS 39601, ATTENTION: Youth Director Search Committee.

**STEENS FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, STEENS, MS.** IS CURRENTLY IN SEARCH OF A PASTOR. Candidates must preach only from the King James Version Bible.

## OBITUARY

**David N. Mayhall, 88,** of Magee, longtime Baptist missionary, died March 10 at Baptist Medical Center in Jackson. Funeral services were conducted at First Church,



Magee, on March 17, with burial following in Magee City Cemetery. Colonial Chapel Funeral Home handled arrangements. Mayhall was born in Liberty in 1925. After graduating from high school in 1942, he volunteered to drive an ambulance for the American Field Service and was sent to Burma and India. There he began to feel God calling him to the foreign mission field. Returning home, he studied at Mississippi College where he met and married Ollie Mae Ware. After studying at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky., the Mayhalls were appointed in 1950 to serve as missionaries to Nigeria by the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board) of the Southern Baptist Convention. They worked for thirty years in Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, and Sierra Leone, establishing schools, training new pastors, and evangelizing. The Mayhalls retired to Magee in 1987, where they joined First Church. David Mayhall was preceded in death by his wife of 66 years, Ollie Mae Ware Mayhall; parents, Nathaniel G. and Dale Brumett Mayhall; a brother, Nat Mayhall; and two sisters, Virginia Carr and Emily Thomas. He is survived by four daughters, Ann M. Redd, Janet M. LaSalandra, Ellen M. Williams, and Gail Mayhall; five grandchildren; and one great grandson.



**WRITING IT DOWN** — Steve Foss of the California Southern Baptist Convention takes input as part of a group exercise by Baptist state statistical representatives during a two-day meeting in Nashville dealing with the Annual Church Profile process. (BP photo)

## Stetzer: ACP answers question, 'Who are we?'

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — People involved in compiling denominational data have a desire "to serve our churches and be good stewards," Ed Stetzer, president of LifeWay Research, told Baptist state statistical representatives during a two-day meeting in Nashville.

Since 1918, Southern Baptists have gathered statistical information on trends in attendance, giving, baptisms, and Bible study participation in Southern Baptist churches, said Stetzer, who leads in LifeWay Research's role of networking with state representatives to gather quantifiable data for the Annual Church Profile (ACP), which is reported to the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

"This was not an easy task to undertake at the time and it is still not an easy task," Stetzer said. By 1945, a method was being used which streamlined the process through uniformity of materials and cooperation, he noted.

The ACP "is still about co-operation, not duplication," Stetzer said. "Information is needed to maintain relationships and indicate relationships. Our focus in gathering data is so we can accurately answer 'Who are we?'"

"Facts are our friends. For many pastor types, faith is our friend — and it should be, but telling facts — the truth — should be our friend to show accurately who we are as Southern Baptists."

ACP data is not owned by LifeWay Christian Resources or any other entity, Stetzer pointed out. "We steward the ACP process. Simply by sharing information together we do it more efficiently. Joint ministry is not possible without cooperation. We believe the ACP matters."

"Churches share informa-

tion about their leaders, enabling encouragement, resourcing and serving together. When churches do not share these contacts, it limits the invitations, the interaction and real relationships with others in the convention."

In recent years, the ACP has been stretched because of fewer resources, various local emphases, and data needs of related processes, Stetzer acknowledged. However, "I'm a believer that scarcity brings clarity," he said. "We can do more focused work with less."

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, spoke on the importance of using proven principles for the ACP and led the state representatives in discussions of the value of church participation in the ACP.

"While a lot of situations have changed in our convention [since the ACP began], there are some common principles that remain," McConnell said.

First, the best statistical process must be efficient for churches, he said. "It can't be too lengthy or difficult, and the church should only have to submit information once for all users. The ACP process has facilitated this process well."

Secondly, the best process entails good stewardship, McConnell said. In having one census annually, he noted that it combines the needs of the churches, associations, states and national entities and utilizes automation where possible.

Thirdly, the best survey asks for appropriate items. "When our history is written, we want the things counted to be our relationships," McConnell said. Through the ACP, congregations indicate whether they have a relationship with an association, state convention, and the SBC.

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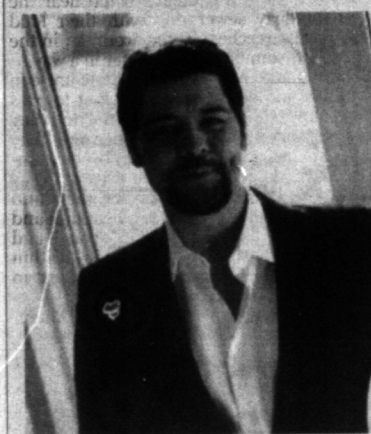
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## Just for the Record



**MT. PISGAH CHURCH, SANDHILL**, held a brunch for ladies and guests. Kay Cassibry, state WMU executive director-treasurer, was speaker. Ed Deuschle, interim pastor.



**FIRST CHURCH, CARNES**, ordained Rick Croy, Kelton Lee, Mike Johnson, and Shawn Hughes as deacons Feb. 24. They are shown with Shelby Saucier, pastor Todd Blackwell, and youth pastor Jim Henderson.



The senior citizen group from **SUNRISE CHURCH, CARTHAGE**, visited the Armed Forces Museum at Camp Shelby.

## Wonderstruck

with  
Margaret  
Feinberg

It's time  
to live  
astounded  
by God

April 5, 7 p.m.  
April 6, 9 a.m.

## Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God  
in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins  
and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the  
grave to forgive my sins and to restore  
my relationship with you.  
(I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life.

From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship  
with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of  
God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church  
for spiritual guidance.



# Testimony COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



featuring  
Molly Jones Moore

## Super Summer and Beyond

When I was a sophomore in high school, I was selected to be a part of Super Summer, the Mississippi Baptist Convention's leadership camp for teens. At this camp my life changed forever. During that week I felt the Lord calling me into the ministry. A week later, I officially surrendered my life to ministry at my home church of First Baptist Church, Brookhaven, MS. So much of my life since that time has centered around the generosity of the Cooperative Program.

Because of scholarships, I was able to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Christian Studies at Mississippi College. Because of my involvement in the Baptist Student Union, I was able to go on various mission trips all over the country, as well as getting involved in apartment ministries right there in Clinton.

After spending a few years

working at a wonderful church in Laurel, MS, I knew that God was calling me to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. And again, it was through the monies of the Cooperative Program that school was even an option for me. The years I have spent at NOBTS in the counseling program have been trying at times, but the training and spiritual leaders I have been under and had the privilege of learning from have been absolutely priceless to me.

I have no idea what the next stage of life will hold for me after graduation, but I know that I have been blessed by the Cooperative Program and Mississippi Baptists, and regardless of where God may lead, my "job" is to carry out the great commission wherever I am.

To view this Cooperative Program Testimony online, please visit <http://www.mbc.org/cp/videos.aspx>

## BIBL i O C I P H E R

QEOQ GY RZO YHQ HB UGQ XGUO QHR  
RH WO UEQEYROJOS NQRH, WNR RH  
UEQEYROJ, QGS RH DELO ZEY VEBO G  
JGQYHU BHJ UGQI.

UGRRZOF RFOQRI: RFOQRI OEDZR.

Clue: I = Y

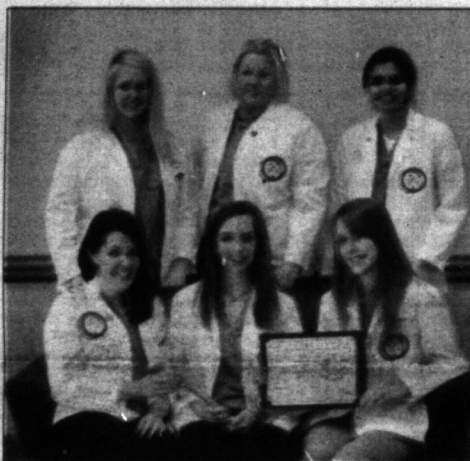
Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark Four: Thirty

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

## College News



While in Kansas City, Mo., for the 2013 Buffalo Funds - National Association of Intercollegiate Athletics (NAIA) Division 1 Basketball National Championship, the **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** men's basketball team spoke to the middle school students at Christ the King School as part of the NAIA Champions of Character initiative. Shown are the team and students.



The **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** College of Osteopathic Medicine (WCU-COM) Student Osteopathic Medical Association (SOMA) is the recipient of the "Young Chapter of the Year" award and was presented with the coveted Golden Tibia at the Spring SOMA Convention in Washington, DC, March 16. This award recognizes the chapter's achievements over the past year as a relatively new chapter, including their efforts in political advocacy, osteopathic awareness and community service. Officers are (front row, left to right) Erin Johnston of Norman, Okla., secretary; Alexis Cates of Mandeville, La., president; Jamie Bishop of Prattville, Ala., national liaison officer; (back row, left to right) Nandini Mehta of New York, NY, treasurer; Kristin Campbell of Pensacola, Fla., public relations director, and Evan Harsh of Fayetteville, Ark., vice president.

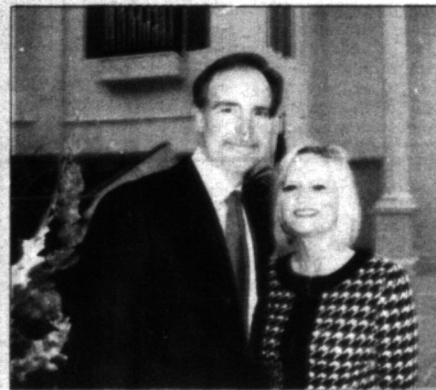
Scott Hummel has been appointed executive vice president and provost at **WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY**. He is currently the vice president for advancement and church relations, professor of religion, and director of the Carey Scholars program. Hummel helped build the honors program and he leads the Carey Scholars to England every other year. He traveled to Linyi, China to help establish WCU's exchange relationship with Linyi University. He has also led mission trips with Carey students to India and Peru.



## Staff Changes



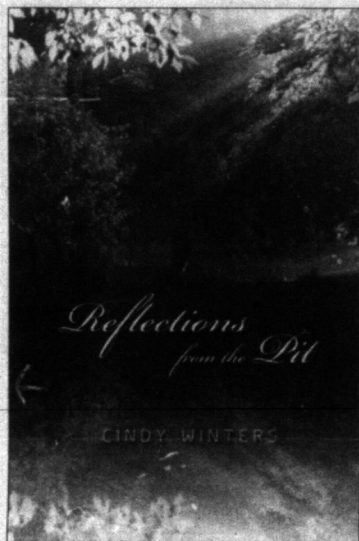
**PARKWAY CHURCH, PASCAGOULA**, has called Martin Britt as pastor. He is shown with his wife Donna. He began ministry Dec. 19, 2012.



**FIRST CHURCH, CALHOUN CITY**, has called Mike Smith as pastor. He and his wife, Pam, come from Gardendale, Ala.



# Life on mend for family of murdered So. Baptist pastor



**MARYVILLE, Ill. (BP)** — Cindy Winters didn't set out to write a book but as she journaled about her grief and pain after her husband Fred was killed in his Maryville, Ill., pulpit four years ago, she realized how healing the writing process could be.

She wanted to share that with others on a similar journey.

Her husband, pastor Fred Winters, was killed at First Church in Maryville in 2009, when a gunman entered a Sunday morning worship service on March 8 and shot him in the chest while he was preaching.

Media outlets immediately descended on Maryville, pushing the story into national headlines. Just days later, Cindy Winters extended forgiveness to the shooter on the CBS Early Show. "We have been praying for him," she said. "...We really firmly believe that he can find hope and forgiveness and peace through this by coming to know Jesus."

Hope, forgiveness, and peace are among the themes in Winters' new book, *Reflections from the Pit*, available now on [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

Her writing process started simply, when she sat down with pen and paper to express some of the emotions that were overwhelming her. "I would leave that writing experience with a sense of renewed strength. Oftentimes, peace would sweep in over me, and then hope, and just a sense of 'OK, you know what? I'm going to be able to make it through the rest of the day.'"

In brief, devotion-like sections, Winters shares her thoughts in hopes of easing some of grief's isolation. The book also includes Scripture passages, nature pictures, prayers, poems, and space for readers to write their own journal entries.

"They're all highly personal, and they all come out of a feeling of being overwhelmed," Winters said of her entries. "They're not all sad. They're not all dark. Some of them are funny. Some of them come from really good places. Some of them are obviously from a really bad spot."



WINTERS

## SUPPORT

cont. from p. 1

its entirety at [christianaction.com](http://christianaction.com).

In his letter Abedini expressed deep concern for his wife Naghmeh, who is waiting for him with their two young children in the United States, and for his parents in Iran who have tried tirelessly to free him from prison.

The letter comes one day after a U.S. State Department official finally mentioned Abedini's case before a global audience and called for his release.

ALCJ Executive Director Jordan Sekulow, reported March 22 that Ambassador Eileen Chamberlain Donahoe of the U.S. State Department on Thursday called for Abedini's release before the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

Abedini's "continuing harsh treatment at the hands of Iranian authorities" exemplifies the worsening plight of religious minorities in Iran, Donahoe said.

"We repeat our call for the government of Iran to release Mr. Abedini and others who are unjustly imprisoned and to cease immediately its persecution of all religious minority communities," she added. "The United States also repeats its call for the government of Iran to provide without delay the urgent medical attention Mr. Abedini needs."

Abedini's ordeal is happening during a period of numerous arrests of Iranian Christians, according to Morning Star News. The increase in arrests, the news service said, is likely related to the upcoming presidential elections.

Christians in Iran, according to World Watch Monitor, are routinely arrested and interrogated because Iranian authorities view Christianity as a deviant anti-government

movement and Christians as pawns of the West.

ACLJ reported March 18 that Abedini had been examined for internal bleeding sustained from the repeated beatings he has endured in Iran's infamously brutal Evin prison. He was promised medical attention at a private hospital outside the prison, but there was no word on when or if this would actually occur.

Abedini was recently granted an extended two-hour visit with his Iranian family, which Sekulow took as a sign that international pressure is working. "Now is the time to step up the pressure," Sekulow wrote. "We know Iran is listening."

Nearly 550,000 people have signed a petition at [SaveSaeed.org](http://SaveSaeed.org) calling for Abedini's release, and several U.S. congressmen are advocating on his behalf. ACLJ continues to call for Secretary of State John Kerry to make a public, proactive statement calling on Iran to release Abedini without delay.

Abedini has become a widely known face of religious persecution in Iran, but as Morning Star News said, there are many others. Five Christian converts arrested last year in Iran went on trial March 10 and were given enormous bail terms.

Outlandish bail terms often are used as a tool to create economic hardship for converts and their families and churches, a representative of Christian Solidarity Worldwide said.

Police originally arrested the five men and two others at a house prayer service. The arrests were part of a larger crackdown against non-Islamic religious groups perceived as posing a threat to the theocratic regime, Morning Star News said.

Charges of threatening national security often are leveled at converts to Christianity in the Islamic Republic, which

considers apostates from Islam a dangerous, uncontrolled element in society.

The five men are members of the Church of Iran, a heavily persecuted denomination to which jailed pastor Benham Irani also belongs, Morning Star News said. Irani continues to languish in prison under a six-year sentence for "acting against the interests of national security."

Also imprisoned, facing a nine-year sentence, is Mohammad Ali Dadkhah, the attorney who defended another long-imprisoned Iranian pastor Yousef Nadarkhani whose freedom was the focus of a worldwide campaign that resulted in his release last year.

At least four other Christians are on trial in Iran. They were arrested a year ago in a house church meeting and charged with Christian activities, disturbing national security and distributing propaganda, Morning Star News reported.

They apparently were brought to several court appearances in chains, which is illegal even under Iranian law.

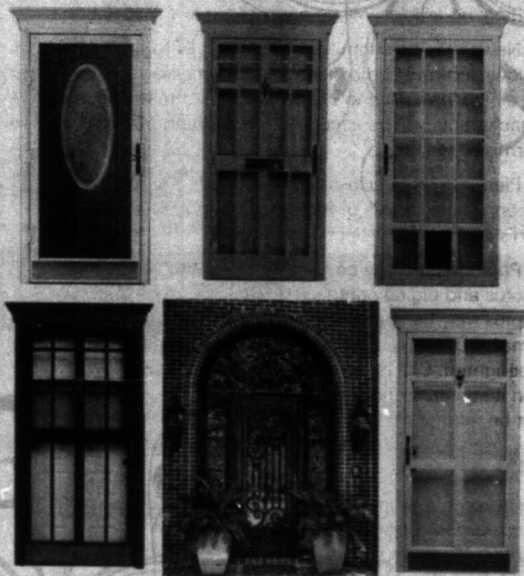
In a report March 16, World Watch Monitor cited a rare crackdown on Christians in Isfahan, Iran's third-largest city. The increased persecution is believed to be a tactic to discourage Muslims and converts to Christianity from attending official churches.

Since February, World Watch Monitor said, officials have arrested about 12 Christian converts in Isfahan, including seven who were taken from their homes along with valuables including their Bibles, computers and important documents. None have been officially charged.

Iran is the fifth-worst persecutor of Christians in the world, according to an assessment by the Christian support group Open Doors.

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## RAIL

nt. from p. 1

rt of February, on a week-  
d when it was 80 degrees."  
Gantt said the new digs  
ould translate into a larger  
oup of riders for the popular  
overnight Trail Ride. "I think  
e'll pick up some more riders  
ecause we can handle more  
orses," he pointed out.

The Evangelism Depart-  
ment at the Mississippi Bap-  
tist Convention Board (MBCB)  
sponsoring the Overnight  
Trail Ride.

MBCB Evangelism Director  
Don Lum said, "We are a state  
of subgroups. We have motor-  
cyclists, hunters, fishermen —  
and we have a horse culture.  
Anytime I'm on the road in  
Mississippi I see horse trail-  
ers. A lot of people ride."

"Counties all over the state  
have arenas, fairgrounds,  
and other facilities for horse  
shows. We have a great place  
to ride at Central Hills, so we  
hold the trail ride there. Last

fall, folks from all over the  
state came down for the ride."

Gantt said the event has be-  
come a must-attend attraction  
for many Baptist horse fanci-  
ers. "People come and make a  
long weekend out of it. They  
bring their horses, put out  
their own hay and feed, and  
have a nice place now for their  
horses. These stables weren't  
here last year."

Gantt said future plans in-  
clude a feed trough and fresh  
water for each stall. Ample  
space is already available at  
the expansive encampment for  
riders to park their trailers.

Central Hills staffer Clay  
Hathcock led the trail ride last  
year. "Clay's uncle told me  
last year that this was the best  
trail ride he'd ever been on,"  
Gantt said. "So many of these  
rides (at other locations) are  
just paths through the woods.  
Ours have been bushhogged  
so they are wide enough that  
you don't have to worry about  
getting slapped by a limb. The  
trails are safe."

"Right now, we have two

"We had a great time last year with worship  
Friday night and Saturday morning. We had at  
least three pastors to ride. We had grandparents  
and grandkids, husbands and wives, a lot of  
families. We want to provide an opportunity for  
Mississippi Baptists to bring friends who might be  
unchurched or unsaved. They'll hear the Gospel  
while they're here. It's a way for us to reach a part  
of the population we couldn't otherwise reach."

Don Lum

MBCB Evangelism Director

miles of trails but we'd like  
to make them about three  
miles long."

The cost of the Overnight  
Trail Ride is \$45 per person,  
which includes housing or RV  
hookup, meals, and insurance.  
"This is BYOH — bring your  
own horse," said Lum.

Horses are required to have  
an up-to-date negative Cog-  
gins test. Participants can ar-  
rive after 3 p.m. on April 26,

with dinner and activities be-  
ginning at 6 p.m. Breakfast on  
April 27 is at 8 a.m., with the  
ride beginning at 9:30 a.m.

The event concludes with  
lunch on April 27. Local horse  
enthusiasts are invited to ride  
on April 27; their cost is \$15 per  
person, which includes lunch.

"We had a great time last  
year with worship Friday  
night and Saturday morning.  
We had at least three pastors

to ride. We had grandpar-  
ents and grandkids, husbands  
and wives, a lot of families,"  
said Lum.

"We want to provide an  
opportunity for Mississippi  
Baptists to bring friends who  
might be unchurched or un-  
saved. They'll hear the Gospel  
while they're here. It's a way  
for us to reach a part of the  
population we couldn't other-  
wise reach."

Participants 17 years of age  
and younger must be accompa-  
nied by an adult. The event is  
limited to 60 overnight guests.  
For registration, participants  
should contact Central Hills  
Retreat at (662) 289-9730, or  
email [dragage@mbcb.org](mailto:dragage@mbcb.org).

For more information,  
contact Lum at P.O. Box 530,  
Jackson, MS 39205-0530.  
Telephone: (601) 292-3278,  
or toll-free outside Jackson  
(800) 748-1651, ext. 278. E-  
mail: [dmlum@mbcb.org](mailto:dmlum@mbcb.org).

The annual Overnight Trail  
Ride is funded by registration  
fees and gifts to the Mississip-  
pi Cooperative Program.

## Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and  
photographs of special events that take place in cooperating  
churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record  
must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2  
by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms  
provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in  
writing: no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address  
below, and must be contained in the message segment of  
an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text  
attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are  
permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what,  
when, where details of the story, along with a contact per-  
son's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant  
photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital  
photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either  
e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and  
well-lit. Cell phone photographs and other low resolu-  
tion items are generally not publishable. Photographs can  
not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or  
staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs  
are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people.  
No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be  
printed. News items and/or photographs can be published  
one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting  
benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations  
will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one  
week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a  
space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O.  
Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 292-3330.  
E-mail: [baptistrecord@mbcb.org](mailto:baptistrecord@mbcb.org).

## MUSGROVE

cont. from p. 1

including the one I ran as Gov-  
ernor of Mississippi — to deny  
the equal rights to an entire  
segment of our population that  
are afforded all of us under the  
Constitution... [W]e all know,  
or are related to someone, who  
is LGBT [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexu-  
al, Transgender]. They are our  
friends, coworkers, neighbors,  
our siblings, our cousins, aunts  
or uncles, children or parents.  
To deny them basic human and  
civil rights out of political expedi-  
ency is just wrong."

Musgrove is also a former  
two-term state senator and  
lieutenant governor. He was  
defeated for a second gubernatorial  
term in 2003 by Republi-  
can challenger Haley Barbour  
of Yazoo City. He was defeated

in 2008 by incumbent Republi-  
can Roger Wicker in a bid for  
the U.S. Senate. He is currently  
in private practice with a Ridge-  
land law firm.

A spokesman for First  
Church, Jackson, verified that  
Musgrove is a member but said  
he does not presently occupy  
any leadership positions. He is  
a former member and deacon at  
First Church, Batesville.

Musgrove's change of heart  
caught Jimmy Porter, execu-  
tive director of the Mississippi  
Baptist Christian Action Com-  
mission in Jackson, by sur-  
prise. "The Christian Action  
Commission had a great work-  
ing relationship with Govern-  
ment Musgrove while he was in  
office. He was always recep-  
tive and supportive of legisla-  
tion that promoted family and  
Christian values."

"I was very shocked and dis-

appointed to read his comments  
endorsing same sex marriage  
and adoption of children by  
same sex partners. At one time,  
he stood firmly on the teachings  
of the Bible and I am saddened  
that this is no longer true."

When contacted by The  
Baptist Record, Musgrove  
said he gave a great deal of  
thought to the message he  
wanted to convey in the Huff-  
ington Post commentary.

"In writing it, each word was  
carefully chosen to ensure the  
column properly and precisely  
conveyed my feelings on a very  
complex and personal issue. As  
such, I don't feel that expanding  
on those thoughts do justice to  
the column as it was written."

"I make it a habit to be open  
and accessible to the media. I  
hope you will forgive me if I  
refer your questions back to  
the column."

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## STETZER

cont. from p. 2

softens your impact on a society  
that needs you for what you  
believed and acted upon in the  
first place.

Needless to say, I disagree with  
Catholics when it comes to some  
of their doctrine, but even as so  
many keep saying, "if they would  
just change, I'd come back," the

last thing the Catholic Church  
needs is to capitulate to the cul-  
ture of the day because, well, they  
really aren't coming back.

Ask the Episcopalians.

Editor's note: Stetzer is  
president of LifeWay Research.  
This column first appeared at  
his blog, [EdStetzer.com](http://EdStetzer.com), and  
appears here courtesy of Bap-  
tist Press.

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# THE VILLAGE VIEW



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## GIFTS OF HONOR AND MEMORY

A portion of The Village View is allocated each month to a list of Gifts of Honor and Memory. Many groups and individuals elect to pay tribute to others through this sensitive, meaningful, and helpful medium. This feature is hopefully designed to further honor, with taste and respect, those who are and have been special to our special friends.

DECEMBER 16-31, 2012

### MEMORIALS

Jimmy Arthur  
Mrs. Billie Lynn Arthur  
Lamar Arthur  
Mrs. Billie Lynn Arthur  
Alton Atwood  
Hugh & Peggy Jackson  
John Baker  
Bradford Chapel BC  
Mrs. Rita Ballard  
Mr. & Mrs. Paul W. Allen  
John Barber  
Shirley M. Nowell  
Gerald Wayne Bardwell  
Mr. & Mrs. Cecil E. Washington  
Mr. Bryant Barron  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
Annette Barton  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Smothers  
Mr. Jerry Baxtor  
Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
Annie Ruth Beall  
Miss Sarah Marie Smith  
James Ray Beeson  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Sisco  
Mr. Edward I. Beets  
Mr. & Mrs. Jerry E. Breakfield  
Mrs. Marie Biglane  
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Charles Boothe  
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FBC Jackson Deacons  
Mr. & Mrs. Richard Dean  
Charles Robert Burch  
Josh McAlpin  
Ida Burchfield  
FBC Sallito  
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Betty Chapman  
Wanda Chapman  
Charles Christmas  
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Buford Cook  
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Adult Men II SSC, Union South BC  
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Bobby Kirk  
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Mr. Gerald Hughes  
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Dr. Rebecca Sue Wilkie  
Brother of Chris Malone  
Lona Southerland  
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Gail Parker  
Merle Martin  
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Mr. & Mrs. Greg L. Wilkinson  
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Ms. Faye W. Holyfield  
Tyler Townsend  
Mr. & Mrs. Larry Oakes



## Believe in the Risen Lord • Matthew 28:1-10, 16-20

A visit to any store currently selling greeting cards reveals America's view of Easter. While you will find a small Religious section, the majority of greeting cards feature spring, flowers, bunnies, or eggs. While Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the foundation of our faith, the world celebrates selling more baskets, chocolate, cards, bonnets, white gloves, cute children clothes, and men's suits and ties.

The message of the resurrection began at the empty tomb as an angel sent Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to tell His disciples (Matthew 28:1-10). You received Christ into your heart because some spiritual ancestors obeyed Jesus' command to preach the gospel to all creation (Mark 16:16 CSB).

The disciples, however, were skeptical when they first heard of the resurrection of Christ. Mark 16:11 reveals that, "when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe it," CSB. The account in Luke 24:11 uses stronger words, "But these words seemed like nonsense to them, and they did not believe the women," CSB.

While the disciples' reaction may surprise us, few of us believed the first time we heard. The disciple's lack of immediate faith may have been a result of previous selective listening. Je-

sus told His apostles three times that He would be condemned to death, crucified, and would be resurrected on the third day. They reacted almost indifferently.

In Matthew 17:22-23, Mark 9:30, and Luke 18:31 Jesus informed the disciples of His approaching death, and the Scripture simply states they were

deeply distressed. In Matthew 20:17-21, Mark 10:32, and Luke 9:43 Jesus again told them about His trial, death, and third-day resurrection. Amazingly, in the very next verse the mother of James and John approached Jesus and asked for her sons to sit on Jesus' right and left in His kingdom.

The final time was at Caesarea Philippi, when Jesus asked the disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" Matthew 16:13-23, Mark 8:31 and Luke 9:43 CSB. When Peter ultimately expressed the revelation from the Father that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus blessed him and told the disciples about His upcoming suffering at the hands of

the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and how He would be killed and be raised on the third day. Surprisingly, Peter, the vocal spokesman of the disciples, then rebuked Jesus for this.

The nerve of Peter to rebuke Jesus, yet haven't we all told God how to run His kingdom, how to solve our problems with His power, how He should

answer our prayers, how to do our will and not His? Haven't each of us chosen the world's broad way to destruction

and abandoned the narrow road to suffering and eternal life? The Bible proclaims all have sinned and fallen short of God's magnificent glory, (Romans 3:23 CSB). Our selfishness, our waywardness, our choosing the path of sin is why Jesus chose the road to suffering on the cross, to die for our sins (Romans 5:8 CSB).

After Jesus died and rose again, He appeared to the disciples a few at a time. Once all were there except Thomas, whom we call doubting Thomas. Interestingly, our Christian friends in Romania call him believ-

ing Thomas and celebrate his change from doubt to faith. In the story in John 20:24-29, Thomas fell on his knees before the risen Christ and exclaimed, "My Lord and my God," CSB. In verse 29 Jesus spoke of Thomas' seeing and believing. Then He blessed all who have not seen and yet believe.

That takes us back to where we began. Each believes at the hearing of the word, (Romans 10:17, CSB). We may not have immediately believed, but eventually we came to faith, even though we did not see. Like Thomas, we must move from doubt to faith, from not believing, to "My Lord and my God." Have you made that move? Are you a doubting Thomas, or a believing Thomas? Jesus pronounced those blessed who believe without physically seeing him. Jesus longs to bless you with His presence. Though dead, He is alive. Hallelujah!

Though dead in your sins, you may be alive in Jesus Christ. John 1:12 reads, "But to all who did receive Him, He gave them the right to be children of God, to those who believe in His name," CSB. Receive Jesus Christ, the free gift of God's forgiveness, and then tell someone else. That's how you heard. Pass it on.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.



### Explore the Bible

with Rick Henson

## Seeing or Recognizing? • John 20:1-18

In the fall of 1979, avowed atheist Lee Strobel received some stunning news; his wife Leslie announced she'd become a Christian. He feared the worst, envisioning changes he did not consider desirable.

"Instead, I was pleasantly surprised - even fascinated - by the fundamental changes in her character, her integrity, and her personal confidence," states the author of *The Case for Christ*. Deciding to delve into what prompted these changes, Strobel "launched an all-out investigation into the facts surrounding the case for Christianity."

Through the eyes of the disciple John, we can likewise investigate truths about the resurrection. Pondering these key Scriptures focuses our attention on this cornerstone of our faith. With the upcoming Easter weekend, more people than usual will be attending church services. Some, like Strobel, don't really comprehend this event that turned the world upside-down - and has turned countless lives right-side-up. These need to experience the living Lord!

Envision with me a grief-stricken Mary Magdalene, as she and other women make a visit to Jesus' tomb in the wee hours of the morning (John 20:1 and Mark 16:1-2). Mary had been a dedicated follower of Christ after He freed her from the grip of seven demons (Luke 8:2). She had looked

on helplessly as her Savior endured a hideous death on Calvary's cross, and had seen His mutilated body placed in the tomb (Matt. 27:55-61). The burden of the spices she carried to anoint His body was nothing compared to the heaviness of her broken heart.

As wisps of crimson and gold began to streak the sky, Mary arrived at the

tomb. In shock, she saw the stone sealing it had been rolled away, and the Lord's resting place vacated! Racing to John ("the one whom Jesus loved"; John 20:2 NRSV) and Peter, she breathlessly announced, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!" (vs. 2 NIV).

Verses 3-9 detail the two disciples' foot race to check out this report. John, arriving first, peered in, but Peter dashed in, examining the linen grave clothes. John then entered and took in the sights; verse 8 says "he saw and believed."

Believe...a critical word. Evidence was mounting for the resurrection; first the empty tomb, then the limp lin-

en strips and folded burial cloth. And after Peter and John returned home, a weeping Mary was greeted first by two angels, and then the risen Christ (vss. 11-14). Notice verse 15: as Jesus addressed Mary, she thought He was the gardener. Until she recognized who the Lord was, she still felt hopeless. However, once Jesus tenderly called her

name, she recognized Him and responded appropriately, falling at His feet in believing worship (Matt. 28:8-9).

After that, she went to the disciples to share her joyful news: "I have seen the Lord!" (vs. 18) She then recounted the things He had told her.

Those who have embraced Jesus as Lord and Savior have experienced His calling their names. Like Mary, we can't respond to Jesus until we truly recognize who He is. John 5:39 says the Scriptures point to Jesus as the giver of eternal life; studying God's Word is imperative. Those needing to trust this resurrected Christ as Savior can find help in these passages: John 3:16, John 10:10, Romans 3:23, 6:23

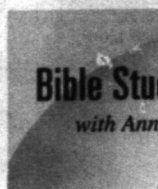
and 5:8, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 14:6 and 1:12.

Yes, the resurrection is a scriptural fact we can trust. And this incredible event isn't just a history lesson. Today, believers can experience the same power that raised Christ from the dead (Ephesians 1:18-20)!

That brings us back to the story that introduced this lesson. On November 8, 1981, after almost two years of intense research, Lee Strobel had to face the claims of Jesus. His studies had produced an "overwhelming avalanche of evidence in the case for Christ." This man well-schooled in journalism and law admitted, "The evidence was clear. The one remaining issue was what I would do with it." Alone in his home office, the man who'd scoffed at Christianity quietly embraced the Savior. And what a difference it made; a few months later, his five-year-old daughter came to her mother and announced, "Mommy, I want God to do for me what he's done for Daddy."

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) confirms this incredible resurrection life: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come." My friend, has the Lord made you new? Who will you tell?

Maniscalco is a member of LeMoyné Boulevard Church, Biloxi.

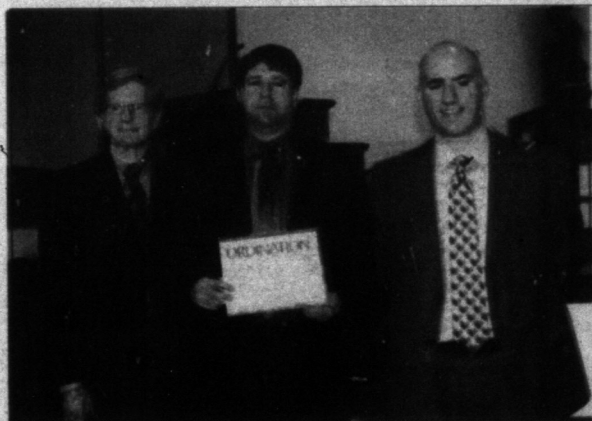


### Bible Studies for Life

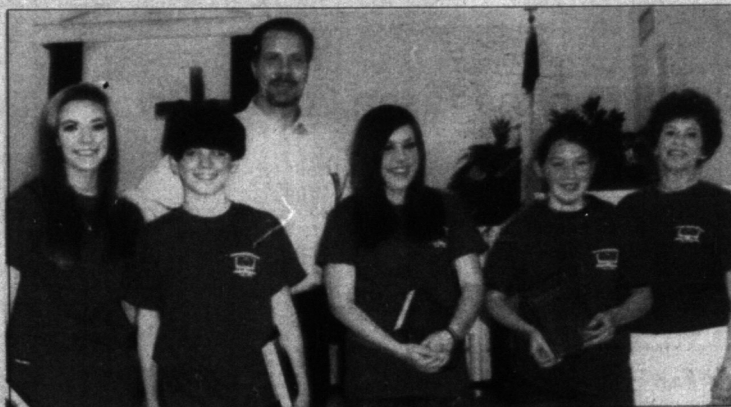
with Ann Maniscalco



## Just for the Record



**CALVARY CHURCH, CLEVELAND,** recognizes its Bible drillers. Shown are Tristain Steadman, Josh Reed, Kelley Harper, and Caitlyn Siklas. Also shown are pastor Larry Braswell and Mary Hellen Kitrell, Bible driller teacher.



**FREDONIA CHURCH, NEW ALBANY,** ordained Jason Weeden as deacon Feb. 24. Shown are Carl Weeden, Weeden, and pastor Chris Madison.

### In other Church News:

► **First Church, Byram,** will host Spoken 4 in concert Apr. 7, 6 p.m. Love offering.

► **New Zion Church, Crystal Springs,** is hosting a spiritual warfare conference Apr. 5, 7 p.m. to Apr. 6, 9 a.m. - noon. Jerry Rankin, speaker.

**WADE CHURCH, MOSS POINT,** held an Upward Basketball and Cheer celebration Mar. 9. Shown is Christian illusionist Larry Wirtz who performed and also ministered in the two children's church services Mar. 10. Cheryl Colvin, children's ministry coordinator; Everett Childers, pastor.



The GAs, RAs, and Mission Friends of **RAWLS SPRINGS CHURCH, HATTIESBURG,** participated in a mission project at Pineview Church Mar. 2. The group made cloth dolls to be distributed as gifts to children in Honduras. Shown are Rustin Howard, Madison Whitlock, Gerry Holly, and Alexis Howard.



**SHUBUTA CHURCH, SHUBUTA,** donated their 15-passenger van to the Nanih Waiya Mississippi Baptist Children's Village. The van was packed with paper products that were to go to the Wayne County Children's Village. Shown are Rory Lee, pastor Jim Harris, and Wayne (Butch) Jenkins.



**HARMONY CHURCH, WALNUT,** recognized Joel Wooley for 15 years of service as minister of music. Shown are Wooley, interim pastor Lyndle Davis, and, back row, Kane Wooley, Bret Wooley, and William Barklay.



**LOWERY MEMORIAL CHURCH, BLUE MOUNTAIN,** recently elected new deacons. Shown are pastor Ron Mitchell, Jimmy Hopper, Leon Enzor, Lavon Driskell, and Jack Moser, deacon chair. An ordination service was also held for new deacon Driskell.